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NIH, Universities Clash on Who Pays for What

Congeniality normally prevails between the chieftains of the big research universities and the National Institutes of Health, which is by far the biggest provider of funds for academic science. The reason, of course, is that the universities usually get what they want from NIH.

But lately, acrid tones have appeared in exchanges between the bank of Bethesda and its university clients. And the reason, quite simply, is that James B. Wyngaarden, in office nearly one year as Director of NIH, has been raising provocative and troublesome questions about that big and ever-growing chunk of NIH money that never reaches the lab—the money that goes into "indirect costs."

No one doubts, or at least doubts aloud, that NIH-supported research activities generate administrative and other burdens for which our financially stretched universities need help. But since 1966, indirect costs as a percentage of direct costs—that's money for lab work—have risen from 15 percent to about 30 percent. With this growth have come suspicions that a kind of Willie Sutton principle drives these costs upward as universities home in on whatever bundle is most accessible.

US and India Agree On R&D Collaboration --- page 6

Last year, the Reagan Administration, with its customary lack of sentimentality on money matters, decreed a 10 percent cut in indirect-cost payments. Academe's smooth-running Washington lobbying apparatus promptly responded with a Capitol Hill offensive that led to the cut being rescinded, but with the stipulation that the Department of of Health and Human Services and the Director of NIH report back after studying the matter in consultation with NIH's grantee organizations.

Having earlier expressed concern about the pressure that indirect costs were putting on NIH activities (SGR Vol. XII, No. 2), Wyngaarden was already eyed with some reserve by academic administrators when they received a letter from him, dated February 14, proposing a meeting to discuss the Congressionally mandated study. Enclosed was what Wyngaarden's letter referred to as "a draft of the report, which presents several options that the Public Health Service and the NIH have developed. I believe this paper can serve as the basis for our discussions," Wyngaarden suggested.

The draft bore the infelicitous title "Containing Expenditures for Indirect Costs of Biomedical and Behavioral Research"—a provocation in and of itself, since the recipients of indirect-cost payments are interested in expansion, not containment. The text of the draft then proceeded to inflict further offense by stating that the Department of Health and Human Services was alarmed by the rising amounts going into indirect costs and "believes that expenditures...should be made subject to new restraints. In these times," the draft continued, "when the needs and opportunities to gain new knowledge in the life sciences far outstrip the funds which society realistically can provide, it seems more important than ever to support as much research as possible. It is also important to avoid the erosion in public confidence that could occur

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In Brief

Rarely has Reagan budget-axe swinging appeared so irresponsible as it did on March 16 during a House hearing on the proposed elimination of the $5-million-a-year Center for Fire Research, part of the National Bureau of Standards. Conceding the uniqueness and life-saving importance of the Center, NBS Deputy Director Raymond G. Kammer Jr. said the feds could get out because the private sector would take over the work. Asked whether NBS had, in fact, consulted with or even identified the hoped-for replacements, he acknowledged that it hadn't.

More scientists are finding employment in industry, according to NSF's latest survey of the science and engineering job market. In 1981, industry accounted for 44 percent of science jobs, compared to 37 percent in 1976. The change was mainly due to increased employment of computer specialists, NSF says, but by mid-1982, this long-booming market was reported to be slowing. (From NSF 83-300, 4 pages, available without charge from: NSF, Division of Science Resources Studies, 1800 G St. Nw., Washington, DC 20550.)

Deposed in France's recent cabinet reshuffle: Jean-Pierre Chevenement, Minister of Research and Industry. Widely hailed as a dynamic rejuvenator of French science and technology, Chevenement roiled both the mandarins of science and the captains of industry. His successor is Laurent Fabius, former Budget Minister.

The Cost Options on Which Academe Gagged

Following are the "options" for revision of indirect-cost procedures that NIH Director James B. Wyngaarden listed for discussion in his letter of February 14 to representatives of major research universities:

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1. Across-the-Board Reduction

This option, in the form of a 10 percent reduction, was proposed as part of the FY 1983 budget request. The principal advantages of this approach are two: it would be simple to implement and it would spread the burden proportionately across the grantee community. The principal disadvantage, if adopted as long-term policy, would be to encourage efforts to increase indirect cost charges to Federally sponsored projects; i.e., grantees would have an incentive to make their indirect cost rates as high as possible in order to ameliorate the effect of receiving only 90 percent of the reimbursement for which they qualify.

2. Redefinition of Reimbursable Indirect Costs

This option has both short-term and long-term variants. In the immediate future, this option could be implemented by selectively limiting reimbursement for those components of indirect costs which seem least related to research; e.g., "departmental administration" and "general administration;" this would require a special exception to OMB Circular A-21. [the basic rules for indirect costs]. For the long term, OMB could revise Circular A-21 with a view toward better containment of indirect costs; e.g., through more incentives for grantees to increase the efficiency of their administrative processes; through reduced Federal requirements for administration and record-keeping; and/or through selective restrictions on reimbursements for certain classes of expenditures. If Circular A-21 were so modified, the Department then could reaffirm the policy of paying allowable indirect costs in full. The advantage of this option is a reduction of indirect costs through improvements in the administrative efficiency of the institution and a reduction in Federal record keeping requirements. The disadvantage of this option in the short term is a possible shifting of affected costs to direct or other indirect cost components, resulting in a loss of potential savings. In addition, some universities would be hit harder than others by this policy, due largely to different management structures and accounting systems.

3. Establishment of a Standard Fixed Allowance

This approach is both conceptually and operationally simple, and it could be implemented immediately. If coupled with deregulation in the form of a significant reduction in record keeping requirements for grantees (e.g., elimination of time-and-effort accounting and cost sharing documentation), a fixed allowance for indirect costs could be an attractive, long-term policy as well. It also would reduce the administrative burdens of the awarding agencies and the Federal staff time required to audit and negotiate rates. Some audit efforts would still be required, however, to ensure that the standard allowance would not result in excessive payments to some grantees. The principal disadvantage of a standard fixed allowance is that it almost necessarily would be arbitrary and would not affect all grantees equivalently. Another disadvantage is that this option could result in attempts to circumvent the standard fixed allowance by shifting costs from the indirect cost category to the direct cost category.

4. Establishment of Fixed Allowance Tailored to Each Institution's Historical Level

Each grantee could be assigned an individualized allowance for indirect costs by fixing the indirect cost/total cost ratio based on the experience of recent years. For example, the PHS could set indirect cost payments at the same percentage of total costs that they accounted for over approximately the last decade. The advantage of this option, in addition to the same deregulation advantages associated with option 3, is that the major impact would be felt by those grantees whose indirect costs have been growing disproportionately. By contrast, grantees whose indirect costs have been stable or nearly so, as a percentage of total costs, would probably experience little, if any, adverse impact. Again, the disadvantage is possible shifting from indirect to direct costs.

5. Choice of a Fixed Allowance or a Negotiated Rate

This approach would allow the grantee to choose either a fixed allowance or continue the "rate negotiation" process. If choosing negotiation, all cost categories would be standardized and there would be an explicit delineation of what types of expenditures could be classified within the categories and claimed as indirect costs. The institutions would also be required to standardize their accounting approach. The major advantage would be the elimination of cost shifting and consistency of application. The disadvantage could be a possible complexity of implementation; e.g., OMB Circular A-21 revision, probably a more complicated negotiation process initially, and some increased costs associated with making adjustments to institutional accounting systems. Also, cost estimating would be severely complicated.

...They Counter that Direct Costs Are Too Low

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if the budget category least obviously related to research continues to grow fastest." Wyngaarden then listed five options (see page 2).

The response to this invitation to sacrifice in behalf of NIH's perception of the public interest was a snippy letter, dated February 16, bearing five signatures: Robert M. Rosenzweig, recently resigned from a Stanford vice presidency to become President of the organization of academic-research heavyweights, the 52-member Association of American Universities (AAU); Robert L. Clodius, President of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges; Jack W. Peltason, President of the American Council on Education; Lattie Coor, President of the University of Vermont and Co-Chairman of the aforementioned organizations' Joint Committee on Health Policy, and Donald Kennedy, President of Stanford.

Referring to the draft sent by Wyngaarden, they adopted a stance reminiscent of the tortuous Vietnam peace negotiations by advising the NIH Director that they couldn't even accept his agenda for devising an agenda. "In our opinion," their response stated, "this is not an acceptable agenda for the start of discussions, the purpose of which is to reach a common understanding of the extent and nature of the problem so that we might then agree on an approach to solutions."

The letter continued: "The source of our difference is quite clear. It is your inference, repeated in the paper you have supplied, that indirect costs are not parts of grants and hence are not research costs but are a separate and less important class of costs; and by the proposition that those less important, non-research costs have risen 'disproportionately.' It is precisely the truth of those two propositions that is at issue."

Stating that discussions in December with Edward N. Brandt Jr., HHS Assistant Secretary for Health, had led them to believe "there was agreement on both sides that it would be inappropriate" to discuss revision of the government's indirect-cost rules solely with the Public Health Service, they added: "We would be less than candid if we did not make clear how distressed we are by the course of events."

Hinting that they might harbor some concerns about the recently installed Wyngaarden regime at NIH, they stated, "The current circumstances are especially distressing because, until recently, no agency had a better record of dealing in a sophisticated way with the totality of science—its investigators present and future and its institutional base—than did NIH. We are at a loss to explain why the NIH, for the second year in a row, has chosen to present universities with a radical change in historic policy without any substantive discussion on the merits of the policy."

Fulminating on, and disregarding the fact that Wyngaarden's letter had offered the options paper "as a basis for our discussions" with an invitation to "a productive exchange of views," the five academic chiefs haughtily concluded, "The proposals put forth in your paper are not the product of consultation, nor are they a satisfactory basis for consultation."

The meeting, which took place as scheduled on February 17, was inevitably inconclusive. The usually even-handed newsletter of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, an organization that mainly represents working scientists and is therefore opposed to skimming research funds for front-office costs, characterized the meeting nicely:

Noting that of 21 invitees, only "two could be said to represent the investigator community (a not uncommon ratio at such gatherings,)" the Federation newsletter observed that "the university administrators were not about to blow the franchise in one three hour meeting by getting down to specifics, Congressional mandate or no. They would talk about talking, but they would not talk about indirect costs. The agenda for the meeting," the Federation account concluded, "was, how you say, inoperative."

Having dug in to resist the Wyngaarden gambit, the university representatives went on the offensive shortly after the meeting. In a letter to Wyngaarden dated March 3 (with a copy to Brandt), Rosenzweig, Peltason, and Clodius introduced the proposition that the real problem is that indirect costs look high because direct costs are too low.

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NIH Head Cites Rise in Share of Faculty Pay

To the conspicuous alarm of academe's money managers, NIH Director James B. Wyngaarden has been openly raising questions about the distribution of NIH's resources. In doing so, he has not revealed secrets but has drawn attention to what everyone in the NIH orbit knows, but few talk about: NIH has become a huge feeding trough for activities some distance from the lab bench. Following are excerpts from public addresses by Wyngaarden since he took office last April:

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Let me define the problem of indirect costs as seen by the NIH. Prior to 1966, NIH paid a flat rate of 8 percent, then 15 percent, and, finally, 20 percent of the total award to cover indirect costs of a research grant. The Wooldridge Report of 1965 [a presidentially ordered, extensive study of NIH operations] recommended that NIH abandon the flat rate, and instead pay a negotiated rate of indirect costs based on audits. For the next six years the average indirect cost rate rose rapidly, and by 1972 amounted to 21 percent of the total research grant dollar. Since that time, it has risen less sharply but at a steady rate each year, reaching 30 percent of the total dollar in FY 1982.

Put another way, for each dollar of direct costs, 43 cents goes to indirect costs. This inexorable rise of the total fraction of the research budget represented by indirect costs has occurred irrespective of the rate of change of the research budget. In virtually every one of the last 16 years, the indirect-cost rate has grown faster than the direct cost rate...This has become a divisive issue which requires early solution.

—January 19, 1983, address to the NIH Director's Advisory Committee

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...we do not dispute that indirect costs are real. We are concerned, however, that there has been a steady increase in indirect expenses of research...At issue is the extent of cost sharing of the overhead of research by the university in return for the general strengthening of the university through the research support received from the Government...

Another issue that concerns me is the extent to which faculty salaries consume the research dollar. When Vannevar Bush and his colleagues charted the Federal entry into research collaboration with academia, they emphasized the importance of the intact institution serving the traditional goals of the university. They could foresee the pressures of divided loyalty experienced by a research investigator whose base is in a university but whose support is Federal funds.

Today's pattern of faculty support from Federal granting agencies evolved in steps: First, there was summer salary for the faculty member who was on a regular nine-month appointment; then came reimbursement for released time so that the institution could "fill in" for the investigator who was working on a research project; and finally came full reimbursement to the faculty member for all time spent in research activities. The extensive use of grant funds for the salary support of tenured faculty seems to carry the implication that research is an extraneous activity rather than a part of the fabric of the academic life. We will be exploring alternative mechanisms of faculty support through the university that might strengthen rather than weaken institutional loyalties...

—August 26, 1982, address to the American Psychological Association

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"We who represent the heads of the institutions where most of the research is carried out," they wrote, "believe that NIH has assumed wrongly that indirect costs of research have been rising faster than they should. The word 'disproportionately' has been used and NIH has set about trying to rectify this wrongly perceived problem...We do not believe that indirect costs are rising disproportionately. On the contrary, we believe that monies for direct costs are not rising fast enough to meet the costs of inflation. We suspect that the deflator used by the NIH to express expenditures in constant dollars is too low. We take as evidence for this assumption the fact that the percent of the budget allocated to indirect costs has been rising."

Then, going into the bafflement mode much revered by tacticians seeking to stop something on the Washington scene, the university trio declared:

"We appeal to the Administration and the Congress to aide the community in establishing a coherent and logical process to seek resolution of differing views and to find whatever solutions make sense once perceptions can be refined into fact. We believe that perceptions are substantiated more by the lack of good answers to critical questions than by the existence of any data."

This was followed by a number of recommendations for "refining perceptions into fact," to which was cunningly added, "If it is not possible to reach resolution within the context of the government-wide principles of A-21, we believe the issues must be elevated to the Office of the President."

Since the obscurities of indirect costs are close to the bottom of the heap of priorities for presidential atten-

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US, Soviet Academies Hold Arms Talks

Not secret but unpublicized and unofficial is the way that the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) describes the semi-annual arms-control discussions that it co-sponsors between senior officials of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and a blue-ribbon group of Americans long associated with that subject.

The latest meeting, third of the series, was held in Washington March 15-18, and, according to the few who would talk about it, the proceedings were cordial and fulfilled the purpose of maintaining lines of communication. The meeting, under the auspices of the NAS Committee on International Security and Arms Control, was unannounced, closed to outsiders, and produced no documents.

The Soviet delegation was headed by Yevgeni P. Velikhov, a Vice President of the Soviet Academy who, according to one close observer of Soviet science-policy affairs, is one of the major science figures in the Soviet governing apparatus. Among those accompanying him in a delegation of about eight persons were:

R.Z. Sagdeev, Director of the Institute of Cosmic Research, said to be the equivalent of the science side of NASA; V.A. Legasov, Deputy Director of the Atomic Research Institute; N.N. Blokhim, President of the Academy of Medical Sciences, and G.K. Skryabin, Chief Scientific Secretary of the Soviet Academy.

The American delegation was chaired by M.L. Goldberger, president of Caltech, and included:

Paul Doty, Harvard; Alexander H. Flax, Institute for Defense Analysis; Richard L. Garwin, IBM; Admiral Noel Gayler, USN, ret.; David Hamburg, Carnegie Corp.; Spurgeon Keeny Jr., NAS; Franklin A. Long, Cornell; Wolfgang K.H. Panofsky, Stanford; John D. Steinbruner, Brookings Institution; Jeremiah D. Sullivan, University of Illinois; Charles H. Townes, University of California; Albert D. Wheelon, Hughes Aircraft, and Jerome B. Wiesner, MIT.

US-PRC Meeting Set for May

White House Science Adviser George A. Keyworth will head a delegation of US government research agency directors or deputies that's leaving around May 7 for Beijing for the annual meeting of the US-People's Republic of China Scientific Exchange Commission. The Commission oversees a wide-ranging agreement that includes 17 separate protocols for research collaboration and exchanges of students and scholars.

All of the US government's major research agencies will take part in the meeting, as will the National Academy of Sciences.

In Print

Federal Agricultural Research Facilities Are Underused, report by the General Accounting Office, details the Agricultural Research Service's practice of plunging ahead with construction of research facilities while existing labs are underutilized. On the basis of how much staff the buildings were designed to accommodate, GAO concluded that average utilization at ARS' 148 labs was only 76 percent for ARS staff, and 85 percent if resident visitors are counted. The underuse, the report concludes, is "principally from a declining personnel ceiling and the construction of new facilities." Compounding the problem, it adds, is Congressional resistance to closing facilities. (43 pages, ask for GAO/RCED-83-20; one to five copies available without charge from US General Accounting Office, Document Handling and Information Services Facility, PO Box 6015, Gaithersburg, Md., 20760; tel. 202/275-6241).

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"The Fledgling Science Lobby," *Congressional Quarterly,* March 19, 1983 (Vol. 41, No. 11), a 5-page, roundup on the assortment of Washington outposts, old and new, through which the scientific community lobbies for its cut of the budget. (CQ, a weekly, is sold only on an annual subscription basis; it's available in many university and city libraries.)

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Solicitation for Defense Small Business Innovation Research Program, describes over 200 topics for which DoD, under the Small Business Innovation Development Act of 1982, is inviting proposals from small businesses; deadline for submissions is May 31. (Copies

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tion, the recommendation, in effect, calls for letting the issue drag on indefinitely—which is all to the advantage of those who like the reimbursement rules as they are.

What is the likely outcome of this conflict between NIH and its anxious friends in academe? On the basis of past performance, it seems reasonably certain that nothing much will change. The universities have great staying power and their proficiency at lobbying is enhanced these days by politics' embrace of science and technology as economic saviors. The perception of indirect-cost reimbursement evolving from fair payments into an egregious ripoff is more widely shared in academe and government than one would gather from utterances for the public record. Wyngaarden has many sympathizers, but relatively few supporters.—DSG

Collaborative Research Program Set by US, India

The White House science office has announced agreement between the US and India for new or expanded collaboration in four areas of research.

The program, which will draw on the budgets and staffs of several government agencies, will be coordinated by a new office that's being set up in the National Science Foundation's Division of International Programs. It's not clear how much US money will be put into the joint ventures, but the Administration is asking Congress for $2 million in hard currency for fiscal 1984, and it's also possible, though not yet certain, that India will permit the continued use of US-owned local currency that now supports some bi-lateral projects. The announcement listed the following topics:

Health: Immunologic advances applied to diagnosis and prevention of chronic infectious diseases—such as hepatitis, leprosy, tuberculosis, malaria, and filariasis—in both countries. Control of blindness, with emphasis on cataracts, nutritional blindness, and Eale's disease. New immunological aspects of reproduction biology pertaining to hormone secretion and action, fertility regulation, and infertility.

Agriculture and Biomass Production: Fixation of nitrogen and use of nitrogenous fertilizers, and improved use of pesticides and farm tools. Increasing biomass production for fodder, fuel, and soil improvement, including "realistic tests of concepts to provide renewable energy sources for rural populations..."

Monsoon Forecasting: Studies of short-term predictability and long-term variability to improve agricultural management and worldwide weather prediction.

Decentralized Electrical Power Sources: Research and testing of photo-voltaic energy converters for areas lacking access to central power systems. Applications could include lighting, irrigation, refrigeration for medicine storage, and educational TV.

The research areas were agreed to by a US-India Scientific Panel, which was established following Prime Minister Gandhi's visit to Washington last July. The US members are:

D. Allen Bromley, Yale; Norman E. Borlaug, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center; Robert H. Burris, University of Wisconsin; Henry Ehrenreich, Harvard; Richard M. Krause, NIH; Robert M. White, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research.

Bromley is co-chairman of the Panel, along with S. Varadarajan, of the Indian Department of Science and Technology. The NSF office for coordinating the program will be headed by Roger Doyon, a member of the Foundation's Division of International Programs.

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available without charge from Defense Technical Information Center, DTIC/DDR, Attn. Reference Section, Cameron Station, Alexandria, Va. 22314; tel. 202/274-7633).

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New publications by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment:

Technologies and Management Strategies for Hazardous Waste Control, presents a gloomy picture of the toxic waste load on the American landscape; concludes that "The current federal program indirectly provides more disincentives than incentives for waste reduction," and describes various options for revising federal policies. (A summary is available without charge from Congressional Relations and Public Affairs Office, Office of Technology Assessment, US Congress, Washington, DC 20510; tel. 202/226-2115. The full report, $8.50, is available from the Superintendent of Documents, USGPO, Washington, DC 20402; specify Stock No. 052-003-00899-8.)

Automation and the Workplace: Selected Labor, Education, and Training Issues, an OTA "technical memorandum"—meaning it's relatively short; surveys the field and concludes that "there is little evidence that any sector—including private industry—is seriously considering the long-range implications" that automation might have on skill requirements and training. (105 pages, $5.50, USGPO—as above; specify Stock No. 052-003-00900-5).

AAU to Make Foreign Survey

The Department of Defense has awarded a $350,000 contract to the Association of American Universities (AAU) for a Congressionally mandated study of the nation's resources for "the study and understanding of foreign languages and nations." The study, scheduled for completion early next year, will be headed by Richard Lambert, Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania and former director of the University's South Asia Regional Studies Center.

A directive to carry out the study was written last year into the Defense Authorization Act for the current fiscal year, with the recommendation that $2 million be taken for that purpose from the Army's Defense Research Sciences Program, and that the work be completed by this past March 1. Defense research managers weren't keen about the assignment and the Army was incensed that its research budget was earmarked for a purpose that it didn't consider important. Defense sources says that they hope that the AAU study will satisfy interested Congressmen, particularly Rep. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), who led the push for the study. It's possible that another $150,000 may be laid out for the study but DoD hopes that would be the end of it.

Social Sciences Say R&D Boom Bypasses Them

While the Administration and the beneficiaries of its selective increases for science and technology are happily cooing over the fiscal 1984 budget, one of the less-favored sectors, social science, has been griping aloud on Capitol Hill. Testifying for the American Psychological Association on March 10 before the House Science and Technology Committee, Herschel W. Leibowitz, Professor of Psychology at Pennsylvania State University, pointed out that the social and behavioral sciences have taken a beating from Mr. Reagan. The following excerpts are from his testimony:

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We estimate that an increase of 32.2 percent (or $10.9 million) over the FY 83 budget is required to restore the Behavioral and Neural Sciences division to a level of funding comparable to FY 80. But this division is slated for an increase of only 12.2 percent (from $33.8 million in FY 83 to $37.9 million in FY 84). Within this division, there is an even more disturbing proposal to limit the psychobiology program to an increase of only 2.7 percent (from $3.7 million to $3.8 million in FY 84). Yet we estimate that an increase of 48 percent (or $1 million) is needed to restore the program budget to a level comparable to FY 80. Similarly, the Social and Developmental Psychology program would change only 4.7 percent (from $2.1 million in FY 83 to $2.2 million in FY 84) if the Administration's budget is adopted. But because of recent budget reductions, a 90 percent increase or $1.9 million) would be required to restore this program's budget to its FY 80 strength.

Instead of restoring these programs, the Administration's proposals would have the effect of further reducing NSF support for the behavioral and social sciences because the increases fall below the rate of inflation. Only budget proposals for the Neurobiology program and the Social and Economic Sciences Division approach parity with the Foundation's other areas of research. Neurobiology is targeted for a 16.3 percent increase (from $11.2 million in FY 83 to $13.0 million in FY 84) and Social and Economic Sciences are targeted for a 17.7 percent increase (from $19.8 million in FY 83 to $23.3 million in FY 84).

Math Congress Funds Blocked

There's no sign of a reversal in the Administration's denial of National Science Foundation funds for travel to the International Congress of Mathematics in Warsaw this August. But at the State Department, which tells NSF what to do on such matters, the word is that "the matter is not finally settled."

The Congress, sponsored by the International Mathematical Union, is normally a quadrennial affair, but because of the turmoil in Poland last year was put off to this summer. In preparation for the meeting, NSF awarded the American Mathematical Society $60,000 in 1981, as a downpayment on what was expected to be a total of about $235,000 for travel grants of $1100 per head for Americans attending the conference and some related administrative expenses.

NSF has the money on hand for the meeting, which looks as though it will be held as scheduled, but the last official word from the State Department was that there's been no change in the policy of withholding funds for travel to Poland.

Privately, however, SGR has been told something a touch different, but whether it amounts to anything we can't say. Asked whether any change might be forthcoming in time for mathematicians to go ahead with plans to attend the August meeting, a State official responded, "If we're forced to make a statement, we'll say we can't approve funds."

USSR Shifts Science Attache

Igor Makarov, one of the Soviet Union's most experienced and outgoing observers of the American scientific scene, has completed a tour of duty as Science Counselor at the USSR's Washington embassy and has been assigned to the State Planning Committee in Moscow.

His successor is Yevgeniy G. Zhvakin, who has been a first secretary at the embassy for the past year. Both Makarov and Zhvakin were trained as aeronautical engineers, as was Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. But that's said to reflect coincidence, rather than design.

Makarov, who has served three tours in the US, for a total of 11 years since 1967, was cold-shouldered by US science-policy officials in obedience to the post-Afghanistan chill in Soviet-American relations. Last fall, for example, NASA officials declined his invitation to attend a talk and reception that he gave at the embassy on the 25th anniversary of Sputnik I.

Makarov did get around Washington science-policy events open to the public, such as Congressional hearings and press briefings. In 1981, he made the *New York Times* when he addressed an audience at the National Institutes of Health and defended Soviet policy on dissidents and emigration of Jewish scientists. In a long Q and A with SGR (Vol. XII, No. 2), he expanded on those subjects and addressed various issues of Soviet-American scientific and technical relations.

Drive on Again for New NIH Arthritis Institute

The arthritis branch of the "disease-of-the-month club" came close to success last year in its long campaign to detach arthritis from its present multi-disease institute at the National Institutes of Health and set it up in a new institute. The push is on to accomplish that end in the current Congress—and the odds are looking good that it will be done.

At an NIH authorization hearing on March 17, Senator Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) not only expressed confidence that the new institute would be approved, but actually sounded a bit militant about it. Stating that he started out as a doubter but was now more convinced than ever that the change is desirable, Hatch said the new institute is "necessary...for this focus, given that these ailments are the most common and among the most costly health problems afflicting our citizens."

The NIH leadership raised its usual objections to the proposal—that it would be needlessly costly to set up a new institute and out of harmony with the substantive trends in the conduct of research. But the legislative proponents have heard it all before and remain unpersuaded.

The formulation that Hatch favors would take Arthritis out of its present setting, the National Institute of Arthritis, Diabetes, and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, and relocate it in a new institute. Originally, the new one was to be the National Institute on Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases. But dermatologists got into the proceedings last year, and Hatch's bill went to the floor as an act to establish a National Institute on Arthritis, Musculoskeletal, and Skin Diseases. The House verison, backed by the influentially placed Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health and Environment, leaves out the Skin. Both measures were passed last year, but in differing versions, and time ran out in the crowded post-election lame-duck session before they could be reconciled.

During the hearing, Hatch also said the Committee will "address specific problems and concerns about our biomedical research efforts which have been conveyed to us by some citizens and professional organizations." He listed as "most common among these...mismanagement of funds, fraudulent research, favoritism resulting in funding primarily well-established scientists, resistance to funding research in unpopular or non-traditional therapies, and over-emphasis on biomolecular research at the expense of preventive and behavioral medicine research."

However, after raising those provocative subjects in the presence of a roomful of NIH brass, Hatch cooled the scene by stating:

"There is a legitimate basis for some of these allegations. However, I am doubtful that the way to solve these problems is by legislation. I prefer to convey the concerns of my colleagues and the citizens we represent to official within HHS (Health and Human Services) and NIH with the full expectation that they will respond with efficient and effective solutions."

That's what's known as a warning shot across the bow.

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